

Message Text

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EXDIS

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TAGS: PEPR, PINT, LE, IS, SY

SUBJECT: LEBANON: STOPPING THE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT

REF: DRAPER/LANE/PARKER TELECONS

1. ASIDE FROM THE OVER-RIDING HUMANITARIAN NEED TO END THE
FIGHTING IN BEIRUT, WE ARE CONCERNED THAT A CONTINUATION OF
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THE PRESENT SITUATION WILL CAUSE MANY ORDINARY CHRISTIANS
TO TURN AGAINST SARKIS AND HIS GOVERNMENT, THEREBY FURTHER
ERODING THE CREDIBILITY AND EVEN THE VIABILITY OF THE
CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. WHAT WE BELIEVE WE MUST DO NOW IS TO
ENGAGE THE SYRIANS IN A DIALOGUE DESIGNED NOT ONLY TO BRING
AN END TO THE FIGHTING AND PERHAPS TO FIND A LONGER TERM
SOLUTION TO THE SYRIAN-CHRISTIAN CHALLENGES, BUT ALSO TO

PUMP UP THE AUTHORITY OF SARKIS IN THE PROCESS. OUR THOUGHT IS THAT WE SHOULD TRY TO RE-ENGAGE THE SYRIANS IN AN EXCHANGE STRESSING SOME OF OUR COMMON INTERESTS AND GOALS IN LEBANON, IN THE KIND OF DIALOGUE THAT HAD BEEN PRODUCTIVE REGARDING LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PAST.

2. DEPENDING ON REACTIONS FROM EMBASSIES BEIRUT AND DAMASCUS, WHICH SHOULD REPLY NIAC IMMEDIATE, WE PLAN THAT SAUNDERS TOMORROW, JULY 6, WOULD CALL IN SYRIAN AMBASSADOR HERE WHILE CHARGE PELLETREAU SEEKS APPOINTMENT WITH KHADDAM OR HIS DEPUTY. IN THE PRESENTATIONS TO THE SYRIANS, WE WOULD REVIEW INITIALLY THE U.S. THINKING THAT WAS BEHIND THE CALL FOR A LONDON MEETING ATTENDED BY THE SECRETARY, DAYAN, AND KAMEL. IN AN APPROACH WHICH WOULD BE SIMILAR IN THRUST TO APPROACHES IN AMMAN AND JIDDA, WE WOULD MAKE CLEAR THIS MEETING WAS CALLED AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE U.S. AND THAT WE WOULD HOPE FOR A MUTED SYRIAN PUBLIC REACTION, EVEN IF WE COULD NOT EXPECT SUPPORT. TALKING POINTS ON THIS ISSUE BY SEPTEL.

3. THEN OUR PRESENTATION WOULD TURN TO THE LEBANESE PROBLEM, MAKING THE FOLLOWING MAJOR POINTS:

-- U.S. POLICY TOWARDS THE LEBANESE PROBLEM HAS BEEN CONSISTENT. WE HAVE STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT AND ITS UNIFYING POLICIES. WE ARE PROVIDING
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ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE. AT OUR INITIATIVE, WE SECURED THE ADOPTION OF RESOLUTION 425 WHICH INTER ALIA AIMED AT THE REESTABLISHMENT OF LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY IN THE SOUTH AFTER ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL.

-- THROUGHOUT THE LAST TWO YEARS, WE TRIED TO CONSULT REGULARLY WITH SYRIA ABOUT LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS, AND WE HAVE BEEN GRATIFIED WITH THIS HELPFUL DIALOGUE. SYRIAN EXPLANATIONS OF THEIR POSITIONS HAVE HELPED US IN FORMULATING OUR OWN POLICIES. WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY SENSED THAT THE U.S. AND SYRIA SHARE MANY COMMON OBJECTIVES, IN WANTING TO SEE STABILITY AND SECURITY RETURNED TO LEBANON, IN SEEKING TO FORESTALL MOVES TOWARDS PARTITION, IN BUILDING A TRULY NATIONAL, CONFESSIONALLY-MIXED LEBANESE ARMY, AND IN BOLSTERING THE AUTHORITY OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WHILE IT SEEKS A NATIONAL CONSENSUS. WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY BELIEVED THAT SYRIA HAS DONE A GOOD JOB IN MAINTAINING SECURITY ON BEHALF OF THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT, DESPITE THE MANY PROVOCATIONS, AND WHILE RECOGNIZING IT MUST OFTEN APPEAR AS A THANKLESS TASK. WE NOTE THAT THE LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER HAS AGAIN PUBLICLY REITERATED LEBANON'S CONTINUING NEED FOR THE ADF AND SYRIA.

-- IN THE SPIRIT OF THESE PAST EXCHANGES, WE HAVE TO NOTE THAT THE SYRIAN MILITARY REACTION TO THE MOST RECENT PROVOCATIONS IS BEING SEEN AS EXCESSIVE. CONCERN IS NOW BEING VOICED FROM QUARTERS WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE APPLAUD SYRIA'S EFFORTS TO STABILIZE LEBANON. IF THE FIGHTING CONTINUES AT THE PRESENT SCALE, PEOPLE WILL BEGIN TO SUGGEST THAT SYRIA HAS OBJECTIVES BEYOND THOSE OF RE-ESTABLISHING SECURITY IN THE CITY AND INSTEAD IS BENT ON DESTROYING THE MILITARY AND EVEN THE POLITICAL POWER OF THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND THEIR LEADERS ONCE AND FOR ALL.

-- IN ANY EVENT, IF THE FIGHTING CONTINUES, THE SARKIS
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GOVERNMENT WILL BE SERIOUSLY WEAKENED. MANY ORDINARY CHRISTIANS WILL BLAME--NOT THE LEADERS THAT MAY HAVE SUPPORTED PROVOCATIONS BUT--SARKIS FOR UNLEASHING OR AT LEAST ACQUIESCING IN SYRIAN MILITARY REACTIONS.

-- WE THEREFORE SUGGEST AN IMMEDIATE, UNILATERAL SYRIAN CEASEFIRE FOR A STATED PERIOD DURING WHICH SYRIA WOULD REFRAIN FROM MAJOR ARTILLERY AND ROCKET SHELLING, WHILE NEGOTIATIONS ARE BEGUN TOWARDS A LONGER-TERM RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM. WE ARE NOT FORMALLY SUGGESTING BUT WOULD APPRECIATE SYRIAN THINKING ON A CONCEPT WHEREBY THE VARIOUS MILITIAS AND ARMED IRREGULARS WERE REMOVED FROM CHRISTIAN EAST BEIRUT, WHILE POLICE AND SECURITY FUNCTIONS THERE WERE ASSUMED BY LEBANESE POLICE AND POSSIBLY LEBANESE ARMY UNITS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE ADF, INCLUDING THE SAUDIS AND SUDANESE IN ADDITION TO THE SYRIANS, MIGHT AGREE TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES SOMEWHAT FROM MAJOR FLASHPOINTS IN THE CHRISTIAN AREAS, WHILE RETAINING CONTROL OVER THE KEY ROAD JUNCTIONS AND AREAS WHERE THERE HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN INTER-COMMUNAL FRICTIONS AS WELL AS IN THE VICINITY OF THE PALESTINIAN CAMPS. AS A QUID PRO QUO FOR CHRISTIAN WITHDRAWAL OF THEIR MILITIAS, WHICH OSTENSIBLY ARE IN THE AREA TO PROTECT THE PEOPLE FROM THE PALESTINIANS AND LEFTISTS, SYRIA MIGHT OFFER TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE PALESTINIANS A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN THE WEAPONS HELD WITHIN THE CAMPS IN BEIRUT. FYI: WE RECOGNIZE THAT THIS IS PROBABLY UNREALISTIC, SINCE PALESTINIANS WOULD RESIST. PURPOSE OF THIS POINT IS TO GET SYRIANS TO THINKING ABOUT WAYS TO DEAL WITH CERTAIN OF CHRISTIAN SECURITY CONCERNS. IF THE RESULT WERE NO MORE THAN A CYNICAL, OR HALF-HEARTED SYRIAN GESTURE VIS-A-VIS PALESTINIANS, WE WOULD BE HAPPY IF IT HELPED CONTRIBUTE TO A CESSATION OF FIGHTING WHILE OTHER MOVES WERE MADE FOR A BETTER SOLUTION. IF THE
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RESULT WERE TO BE A DE FACTO SYRIAN ASSURANCE THAT THE CHRISTIAN AREAS WOULD NOT BE ATTACKED FROM MUSLIM AND PALESTINIAN QUARTERS, THAT ALSO MIGHT BE WORKABLE. END FYI.

-- WHILE WE RECOGNIZE THE ADF AND THE SYRIANS HAVE A MANDATE TO GO ANYWHERE IN BEIRUT AND IN THE COUNTRY, IT SEEMS TO US THERE WOULD BE MERIT IN TEMPORARILY REDUCING TENSIONS BETWEEN CHRISTIANS AND SYRIANS THROUGH A PRAGMATIC SOLUTION OF THIS OR A SIMILAR KIND. WE ALSO WOULD SUGGEST THAT A SOLUTION OF THIS KIND BE SOUGHT THROUGH NEGOTIATION, WITH SARKIS CARRYING THE MAIN BURDEN OF NEGOTIATING CHRISTIAN CONCESSIONS WHILE THE SYRIANS DEAL WITH THE PALESTINIANS. IF THIS OR A SIMILAR SCENARIO COULD BE DEVELOPED BY THE SYRIANS, IT MIGHT BE HELPFUL IN BOLSTERING

THE AUTHORITY OF SARKIS IF HE WERE TO ANNOUNCE ITS MAIN PRINCIPLES (SOFT-PEDALING THE POSSIBLE PALESTINIAN CONCESSIONS) ON RADIO AND TV AND TO CALL ON ALL LEBANESE CITIZENS TO RALLY BEHIND IT. ONE REASON FOR OUR SUGGESTING AN APPROACH OF THIS KIND IS THAT IT PARALLELS THE PROGRESS TOWARDS REVISED SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WAS UNDER WAY EVEN BEFORE THESE LATEST INCIDENTS. AT SAME TIME, WE WOULD NOT WANT TO SEE ANYTHING WHICH WOULD REINFORCE PARTITIONIST TRENDS BEYOND THE POINT OF NO-RETURN.

-- SYRIA CAN BE SURE THAT THE U.S. WILL GIVE ITS BACKING TO ANY EFFORT AGREED UPON BY SYRIA AND THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT TO NEGOTIATE A PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENT WHICH MINIMIZES FUTURE TENSIONS. WE ALSO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE FIGHTING MUST BE BROUGHT TO AN END URGENTLY. FOR ITS PART, THE U.S. WILL CONTINUE TO DO WHAT IT CAN TO HELP THE SITUATION. WE WILL COUNSEL MODERATION AND RESTRAINT UPON THE VARIOUS CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND MAKE CLEAR TO THEM THAT THEY WILL GET NO U.S. SUPPORT AND WILL FACE ACTIVE U.S. OPPOSITION IF THEY TRY FOR PARTITION OR CONTINUE TO
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UNDERCUT THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT. WE WILL CONTINUE TO URGE THE ISRAELIS TO DO LIKEWISE WITH THEIR CONTACTS IN LEBANON, WE MUST ALSO NOTE THAT ISRAELI LEADERS HAVE BEEN RECEIVING IMPASSIONED PLEAS FOR HELP FROM SOME CHRISTIANS. WE HAVE OF COURSE COUNSELLED RESTRAINT UPON THE ISRAELIS.

-- THESE ARE ONLY PRELIMINARY THOUGHTS AND WE WOULD
WELCOME SYRIAN VIEWS. IT SEEMS THAT--AS IS THE CASE WITH
OTHER LEBANESE PROBLEMS, INCLUDING SOUTHERN LEBANON--ALL
OF US MUST PLAY FOR TIME SO THAT EVENTUALLY SARKIS AND
LEBANON'S NEW ARMY CAN BEGIN TO ASSERT AUTHORITY AND
CONTROLS WHICH UNTIL NOW HAVE HAD TO BE ASSERTED BY
OUTSIDERS, THE ADF AND UNIFIL. AN EFFECTIVE CEASEFIRE,
EVEN WITHOUT TOTAL MILITIA COMPLIANCE, CANNOT WAIT MUCH
LONGER, HOWEVER, AND WE BELIEVE SYRIA MUST TAKE SOME RISKS
TO APPLY IT WHILE TRYING TO WORK OUT A BETTER RESOLUTION
WHICH COULD GAIN WIDER SUPPORT. VANCE

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